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Trouble for CIA's Turner

Adm. Stansfield Turner's heavy-handed rule as director of the Central Intelligence Agency has badly tarnished his former glitter, ending any chance of his returning to the Pentagon in a high military post and making him a new and serious problem for President Carter.

Instead of resolving Carter's CIA problems (intensified by the forced withdrawal of Theodore Sorensen's nomination to head the agency), Turner has compounded the President's predicament. Carter must now rebuild confidence not only in the CIA but also in its boss.

One possible solution: Give day-to-day CIA command to Frank Carlucci, a veteran civil servant now serving as ambassador to Portugal, who is coming in as deputy CIA director. Under this plan Turner would be given vague powers as overall presidential intelligence adviser, without operational authority.

This possibility stems from Turner's conduct since taking over CIA. He has run over most everybody in his path, military-style. While this disregard for bureaucratic sensitivity sufficed in 1972-74 when he ruthlessly but brilliantly revamped the Naval War Col-

lege as commandant, the beleaguered CIA is a more complicated civilian institution.

Criticism of Turner as a public breaker of china in his own agency is hurting him in the administration. It has commended him to congressional critics of the CIA, but has raised suspicions elsewhere on Capitol Hill that Turner is taking his cues from Vice President Mondale and a former Mondale aide, National Security Council staffer David Aaron—both sharp critics of the CIA.

Signs of coming trouble in Congress appeared when Turner was quizzed by the House Intelligence Committee early this month. Asked for a "fact sheet" on multiple firings of senior officers in clandestine intelligence, he replied in a six-page memorandum on Dec. 14 that "contrary to media reports, I was not directed . . . by either the Vice President or David Aaron" to reduce the clandestine service.

If this indicates Turner is beginning to walk on thin ice in Congress, that ice broke long ago for him in the Pentagon. Intimates of Defense Secretary Harold Brown confide that, barring a direct order from the President, Brown would not propose Turner for either of the two big Pentagon jobs opening up in June: Chief of Naval Operations or Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Turner has escalated conflicts over intelligence jurisdiction that have embittered relations between the Pentagon and the CIA for years. Led by President Carter to believe that he would become the first true "czar of intelligence," Turner tried to run over Brown and the Pentagon to achieve it. He failed.

Beyond that, Turner's old colleagues in the Navy say privately that his personnel troubles in the CIA prove that he cannot "manage men." "If he comes back here we want him as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs," one top Navy official told us. "That way, he can't do much harm to the Navy."

Simultaneously Turner is attacked, fairly or not, by officials in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. They charge he wastes time in inter-agency strategic-arms talks and is not well informed.

Finally, there are scattered indications, but no more, of Turner's decline within the White House itself. One indication concerns the role of his deputy.

Turner has confided to aides that he did not want a deputy to stand in for him on a regular basis, with access to intelligence evaluations now limited to the admiral himself. Turner intended to assign the "acting" director role, when he had to be absent, to different CIA officials, depending on the current crisis. That would protect his own status.

But the White House is supporting Carlucci's insistence on receiving all intelligence evaluations, with the full status of a stand-in deputy. Carlucci is a tough veteran of bureaucratic warfare who will not back down.

Since gaining full control and support of the CIA appears to be eluding Turner, some experienced officials feel Carter's best recourse is to let Carlucci gradually take day-to-day control of the agency. Just as gradually, Turner would move upstairs to a new role as intelligence coordinator.

The President has not come close to resolving this question. Critics insist, however, that he had better spend more time on it than he did on his choice of Turner in the first place. Otherwise, the worrisome problems of the CIA will only get worse.

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